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"THE POPULAR CONFUSION AS TO THE CERTAINTIES OF SCIENCE AND THE UNCERTAINTIES OF RELIGION"

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Being the third in a series of four sermons on, "Why Does Evolution Make Its Way So Slowly?"

I. "The Partiality of the Human Mind for a Theory of Descent."

II. "The Conviction that Life's Most Precious Things Are Imperiled."

III. "The Popular Confusion as to the Certainties of Science and the Uncertainties of Religion."

IV. "The Crusading Spirit of the Religionist and the Calm Indifference of the Scientist."

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

"Science discloses the Method of the world, but not its cause: Religion its Cause, but not its method: and there is no conflict between them, except when either forgets its ignorance of what the other alone can know. When, for instance, the old book of Genesis announces God as the Cause of all, it speaks the language of pure Religion, which cannot be traversed or met, except behind the field of mere phenomena. When it relates that it took six days to make the universe, and recounts what was done on each, . . . it essays the language of science, and is open to correction from every fresh reading of the order and method of the world.

"An apprehension has become widely spread that Natural History and Science are destined to give the *coup de grace* to all theology, and discharge the religious phenomena from human life; that churches and their symbols must disappear like the witches' chamber and the astrologists' tower; and that, as everything above our nature is dark and void, those who affect to lift it lead it nowhither, and must take themselves away as 'blind leaders of the blind.' Whether this apprehension is well founded or not is a very grave question for society in many relations. Hitherto we have been trained under the assumptions that the Universe, which includes us and folds us round, is the Life-dwelling of an Eternal Mind: that the World of our abode is the scene of a Moral Government incipient but not yet complete; and that the upper zones of Human Affection, above the clouds of self and passion, take us into the sphere of a Divine Communion.

"Religion, in its ultimate essence, is a sentiment of Reverence for a Higher than ourselves. Higher than ourselves, however, none can be, that have not what is most august among our endowments; none, therefore, by reason of size, of strength, of duration; none simply by beauty or by skill, none even by largeness of discerning thought, but only by free and realizing preference of the most Just and Good. A Being of living Will can alone be nobler than myself, lift me above the level of my actual mind by looking at my latent nature, and emancipate me into the captivity of worship. In other words, reverence attaches itself exclusively to a Person; it cannot direct itself on what is impersonal, on physical facts, on unconscious laws, on necessary forces, on inanimate objects and their relations, on space, though it be infinite, on duration though it be eternal."

—James Martineau.

"THE POPULAR CONFUSION AS TO THE CERTAINTIES OF SCIENCE AND THE UNCERTAINTIES OF RELIGION"

We are thinking of the certainties of science, for, when she is certain she is likely to be right. If we are to have a religion from this time on, we have to have it in the same world where the scientists are and where they are always likely to be. We have to have our religion with their help, or in spite of them. Have they shown that religion can be but the confidence of fools and those mentally not very discriminating?

Much of the discussion now is about the conflict of science with a Book and with a theology drawn largely from that Book. This conflict was fought out in the last generation, and, as far as we are concerned, the battle is over. Our concern here is wholly with science and religion. It is inconvenient to have science and one's religious book conflict, but this is not really so serious. It is quite the usual thing for religion to save her life by repudiating the letter of a book, which tends to kill. This Bibliolatry is hurting the peace of our time, blocking knowledge, and threatening intelligence, but this will pass. It is bad enough to have science conflict with one's theology, but that is not serious. One can change his theology. The only serious concern is with science and religion. If science affects it, that would really concern us. That changes one's whole universe; takes the light out of his sky and shuts off his far horizon.

Logic knows what it calls "the law of parsimony," of sparingness in the use of explanations. It says, "Be rather saving of your explanations. Do not use any

more explanation, or any higher explanation, than it takes to explain what is in hand to be explained." If something you can see explains a thing, use that, and do not run off to get a supernatural explanation for just a natural thing. The chances are that one will have to draw upon these supernatural explanations rather generously before he gets through explaining all this universe and he should not use them upon the lesser things that do not call for so much.

When men began a few years ago to look into things, they found it positively was not allowed. Things had been explained supernaturally so long, that, any reason, which the poor mind of man could see, seemed to lack dignity commensurate with the thing to be accounted for. Religion had just about come to the point of resting her case entirely on the unseen hand, on celestial causes for terrestial effects. When one draws upon supernatural causes to explain natural events, he is going to arrive at a world run by miracle, special favor, and special providence. So, it was sacrilegious; it was impious, it was heretical, even to inquire how this world does run in fact. Huxley lived almost in our time and he testified that when he began to examine the universe he found every way blocked with this sign, "No Thoroughfare. By order. Moses," and Moses had been dead three or four thousand years. This habit of appealing to a supernatural explanation, held its own so strongly even up to the days of Kepler, who died in 1630, that, when he could not get any sufficient reason for a planet taking just the course that it did, he said that each planet is directed by an angel in that part of its course. This did not seem a strange proceeding to him, nor to the world to which he told it.

These supernatural explanations of what we now call natural things are in the Book and they are in Christian theology, and these two have lasted over into our time, when the whole conception of things is changed. Religion did exist in the world dominated by these ideas. Now religion is faced with the problem of existing in a world without these ideas. Religion, if she is to continue, has to continue in a world in which this material order of things runs without break, miracle, special favor, or special providence.

Religion has to adjust herself now to a world under physical law that runs on and on with constancy that is never broken and order that does not pause nor turn for man's purposes. It runs, no doubt, for some great end, but, that end is not the little devices of man. Its laws, its forces, can be known and used; can be used by the wicked, or by the righteous, and it rains on the just and the unjust. Saints at their prayers are ground to dust by this physical world and the wickedest company of earth may escape. The prayers of all the churches avail not to bring one drop of rain. We appeal to a department of the government to give us the signs of its coming. This physical creation, we know now, is the part of the great God which is given over to ordered law, for what purpose He knows, not we. There is no evidence that he interferes in its endless working or that man or his wishes are favored. He who knows these laws, be he saint or devil, can use them.

Religion has said, "We think that we can rest our case on this, that nature is not uniform and that God in matter has no regular habits." Popular religion is saying today that her whole case depends upon nature

not being uniform and matter not acting the same in all cases. Formerly religion said she wanted thousands of such cases. Today religion is not asking for so much. She says now, "Give us just these two cases, the virgin birth and the resurrection, and a dozen or so of the leading miracles of the New Testament, and we will concede, that, in all other cases, but these, the laws of God in matter have been uniform. Give us just these little breaks in the great order and we will concede to you all the miracles of all religions and all history." It is quite certain now that these two chief ones, and a dozen or so of the lesser ones cannot be allowed; that religion will have to go on without these, simply accepting this, that nature has never once scotched her ever-rolling wheels to give birth to a god, or to help a saint, or to establish a doctrine.

Now, when one sees science so successful against the belief in a book or a theology, he is likely to think science equally certain against religion itself. Scientists do not so conceive of their knowledge. Huxley thought, "The antagonism between religion and science fabricated on the one hand by short-sighted religious people who confound a certain branch of science, theology, with religion; and, on the other by equally short-sighted scientific people who forget that science takes for its province only that which is susceptible of clear intellectual comprehension. The antagonism of science is to the heathen survivals and the bad philosophy under which religion is often well nigh crushed. And I trust that antagonism will never cease, but, that, to the end of time, true science will continue to fulfill one of her most beneficent functions, that of relieving men from the burden of false science, which is imposed upon them in the name of Religion."

If we should set ourselves here to do it, we might find a score or so of things about which science has corrected the Bible and Christian theology. It is as we should expect it to be, that all explanations of the physical order made before that physical order was known, would have to be revised. In both the Bible and Christian theology are mingled things disparate, the supreme values of religion itself and ecclesiastical guesses about the material frame of things, the order of whose coming and going can be seen and now is known.

We have been living through this period when Christian theology and the Bible were being corrected on these points. It has been rather hard for them to adjust their thought and their language, used and approved by the centuries, to the latest readings of physical law. Religion, through the centuries, has had one new thing now and then to take it and to assimilate, but, certainly it never before had as much to assimilate in a short time as it has had since the recent advent of scientific knowledge. Science in these last years has been knocking down one thing after another which theology said she wanted to keep to prove religion by. Andrew D. White has collected these things in two large volumes. His title is, "The Conflict of Science and Theology." The popular mind now is accustomed to science winning over theology. For all the centuries before, theology always won over science and made science keep still even when she had something really to say. We have lived in a time just the reverse of this. Two requisite conditions coincided in our time, the invention of instruments by which knowledge could be obtained, and, a state of the world in which that knowl-

edge could be given without fear. So we have seen one long series of conflicts between science and theology, with science winning. These almost uninterrupted victories of science over theology have given the impression that wherever science enters she will possess the field.

There always has been a feeling among men that what we call a man's life is a double functioning affair, in two worlds. We never have known very much about either one, but, mind and body, spirit and matter, soul and solid, have covered what we thought we know about them. Or, we have called one psychic, and the other physical, not knowing definitely whether we are a mind with a body, or a body with a mind. In like manner it has been thought that this mind part of the universe dips down into, or runs through, the material part about as our minds do through our bodies. Now, a human body without a mind has no unity, or purpose. It is just a crazy, insane thing. It is thought that in the same manner it is this mind or spirit stuff shot through the universe that keeps it from being a crazy universe, without unity or purpose. If it has been found by science that we are not so made and that the universe is not so made—and it would be useless for us to be made this way if the universe is not, or vice versa—then, if science has found this not a true division of reality, then, all this about religion is just talk that does not connect with anything that is, and we should begin talk about something else.

Religion has about three interests on which she depends for her life. John Fiske thought that these three are religious great affirmations. Religion wants, in the first place, a quasi-human God in the universe, that is,

a God who has in him something like what we have in us that makes us human, and, the unsubstantial quality of us, rather than the substantial quantity of us, seems to be that part. Religion wants, in the second place, some persevering part of man, call it what we may, which is not in the circle of round and round of things always going but arriving at nowhither, something not subject to the laws of dissolution and disintegration with which physics and chemistry deal. In the third place, religion wants some part at least of this universe, or better all of it, to have moral purpose and to know such distinctions. If it is to make the least difference what I do, or what you do; if there is any difference at all between what we call the wickedest thing and the most saintly, it is because these moral distinctions in us correspond to moral distinctions in the mind of the world. If there is no distinction in the mind of the world between our worst and our best, then, it is difficult to see why we should be much concerned with any such distinction. An ethically constituted man means something only if an ethically constituted universe means something.

We do not know how much farther science is going into the near minute or the remotely large, but, thus far, science has not denied that these requisite affirmations of religion can be in the same universe with her. If there are scientists who say she has denied them, there are those, of equal weight, who say she has not, nor has touched, nor is likely to touch, the realm where these three affirmations of religion are.

It is one thing to weigh the moon and this has been done, but it is quite another thing to banish mind, and moral purpose, and the soul, all that we mean when we

say, God, from the universe. The moon has been weighed, but, on no scientific grounds can these affirmations of religion be said to be banished, or to be made impossible to hold by the same rational mind that weighs the moon. Indeed the same mind has done both, weighed the moon and held these.

Let not the fine work, and the exceedingly profitable work, that science has done in correcting the errors in one of many religious books, and in clearing the minds of men from the grossest superstitions, and mythologies, let this grand clearance not be mistaken for a denial of the possibility of religion's three great affirmations.

This is what one of the chiefs in the scientific field says of what they have done and are doing: "Whether or not there is an ultimate cause of a psychical kind pervading all nature, a cause of causes, this is another question which,I take to present no logical contact with Mr. Darwin's theory, or, I may add, with any of the methods and results of natural science." Huxley waged a long and successful war against both Bible science and theology, but, he did not conceive his facts as entering or violating the domain of religion. Religion he defined as, "A consciousness of the limitations of man and a sense of an open secret which is impenetrable." Even Voltaire, who never used the word theology, always substituting "The Infamous" in its stead, even Voltaire built a chapel and dedicated it to God, the only chapel in Europe, he thought, so dedicated.

The intellectual people of our time have not conceived the problem very much better than have the people of Dayton, Tenn. They say it is "either," "or"; it is either their reading of the Bible, or it is desolating

atheism. There is no such miserliness or tragedy as this in the choice of ways out. There is a way between, a via media, and that is intelligent reading of the Bible and rational godliness. Intellectual people today often say the same, it is "either," "or"; it is either going with science, or going with religion. Again there is no such choice of alternatives. One may go with both. One has to take science to understand this world, or to use it, and, one has to take religion to give any meaning to his life with all his use of all his science.

Science takes for her province those forces of the world that strike upon the senses of man and record an impression, or register their effects upon the instruments that she devises, many times more sensitive to impressions than are man's eyes and ears and touch. Given these forces, endowed by something or somebody, with a disposition to be endlessly in motion, or to be unconsciously or consciously alive, science traces what these have done, are doing now and will be doing ten thousand years from now. Science traces this stirring something from the marvelously minute to a unit called an atom, itself so far beyond the sight of man that it exists in the field of mathematical calculation. Science watches this movement from gas to solid planet and back to gas again. Then she watches the same process over again. She traces man from a single cell to his full stature as a man and sees him dissolve into dust again, and leaves him there. Science reads this story of the physical frame of things, reads it backward through the ages and on into time to be. So closely are things tied together, interrelated and correlated, so finely woven into one piece is the whole, this following from that, and that from this, that, given but the tex-

ture of a single point in a single thread, and the whole pattern of the weave can be forcast. Given but a drop of water, know its ways and habits, and from this knowledge of that single drop, without ever having seen them or having been told that such things are, Niagara, the ocean, bearing ships, and the flood and the ebbing tide, could all be foretold. No extravagance of language can overstate this marvel of the human mind catching these habits of the physical world in the act. She has stolen from the tree of knowledge what the ancient gods forbade, lest men should rise into the heavens and take them from their thrones. What scientific men today have done would have made them gods in the olden days, with shrines and temples of their own.

The definite contributions of science to religion have been immense. To her alone religion is indebted for banishing from the world scores of things, at which the modern laughs but which made the life of early men one of constant terror. They have been unhoused and dissolved. Knowledge has dissipated the ignorance upon which they fed and the darkness where they dwelt. That is, this negative and destructive work alone of science has been a purifying and a cleansing fire. If religion decides to build again, she will have a structure builded better and shot through with light and air from cellar to the top.

Yet, when all this is said, and it cannot be said too much, or too often, there remains this other truth, as true, that science is but the revelation of one part of the great order, and what is more she leaves to those who can read it, as well as she reads hers. The world to her is simply a restless force. She asks not how it

started or how it ends, who did it, or why, or whether there is any "who," or any "why." It would seem strange if those who know most of the marvels of the created world should be first to empty creation of a devising and directing mind, or, if those whose discoveries have made the compassion of man for the first time effective should be first to empty compassion from the universe itself.

Science, as such, has not emptied the universe of mind or of compassion. As far as scientific men have said this, it is but *obiter dictum* of the scientific court, and not to be construed as part of the decision of her full bench. Science, as such, does not pronounce upon the mind, or the moral purpose, or the compassion, in the universe. These do not show upon the glass; are not reflected back from the atom or the stars. If there is another part of this great order that does not mark itself upon her lens or photographic plate, or record its weight, or break up into colors when run through the glass, as evidence of its reality, let those who can get this evidence testify to this reality. Science says that she does not deny it. It does not record upon her instruments. This is all the witness that she bears.

Let seer, and poet, and mystic, give the witness of what they have seen and felt, and, scientists, as well as those unlearned, will all be glad enough to find another reality over-arching all, and wrapping us all about. That is, scientists are not more interested than we in finding that this is not as much of a world as we had thought. They and we, all together, have to live in just the kind of world this is shown to be, scantily or generously endowed with possibilities.

In the reality which science knows, man has but a

momentary interest; is not permanently important to himself, or to it. She brings him from afar at the back and drops him at the end as a useless thing, with no place to go.

Religion conceives things more generously; takes this reality which science knows, and crowns it with another; gives the base a top, an upper room, in the confidence that if man has come so far, he can go farther. Religion says that man has more already than science's part of the Great Order can give him or account for. Religion says that man has already, as a part of his estate, that for which science cannot give the what, or whence, or how, or why. Religion acts upon this conviction, that, man may as rationally hope for more of this same kind of reality, as he can rationally account for the part he has already. Science takes one part of man and gives it a history. Religion accepts this history for that part, and affirms another part of the whole man, and gives it a destiny.